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ABSTRACT

The need for early field experiences in teacher education is based on four specific needs: (1) the student need to know if he or she likes teaching; (2) the university need to know if the student shows promise of becoming a good teacher; (3) the student need to practice before assuming major classroom responsibilities; and (4) the teacher education need to nurture better communication between colleges of education and the schools where their students will be working. Three specific models can be used to achieve these needs: the course specific model, which attaches an on-site field experience to an existing teacher education course; the block of courses model, which involves three different levels of field experiences; and the program-related model, which specifies the field experiences, but doesn't tie them to an individual course. (DS)

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Early Field Experiences in Teacher Education

Peggy G. Elliott and Robert E. Mays

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ROBERT E. MAYS **PEGGY G. ELLIOTT**

Robert E. Mays is director of student teaching, field experiences and coordinator of graduate studies at Indiana State University at Evansville. He has taught and supervised in rural and urban schools and has been a curriculum consultant on a number of projects. Mays has authored, co-authored, or edited numerous publications. His most recently published work is *Opening the Public School Curriculum*. He is currently completing a textbook titled *A Personal Approach to Elementary and Middle School Teaching* (William C. Brown Co.).

Peggy G. Elliott is assistant chairperson of the Division of Education at Indiana University Northwest in Gary, where she was formerly director of student teaching and field experiences. She has taught and supervised students in rural and metropolitan areas. She has served as president of the Indiana Association of Teacher Educators and the Calumet Conference of Supervision. Elliott has authored several publications related to field experience programs. Her most recent work is a *Bibliography on Educational Topics: Field Experiences in Pre-service Teacher Education* (1978) prepared for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

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By Peggy G. Elliott and Robert E. Mays

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The Need for Early Field Experiences

For as long as there have been student teachers and directors of student teaching, there probably have been those agonizing sessions in which a frantic and frequently sobbing student teacher in the last semester of the senior year comes into the director's office and blurts out, "I hate it! I can't do it! I can't be a teacher! What am I going to do? I don't want to be a teacher!"

Sometimes the director is faced with an equally distressed university supervisor, supervising teacher, or principal saying, "He can't do it! He can't work with kids; he can't fit into a classroom! What are we going to do? He *wants* to be a teacher!" And, for every one of these emotion-wracked sessions, there undoubtedly should be dozens more, because the painful truth that has too often been ignored in teacher education is that not everybody ought to be a teacher because not everybody *can* teach.

None of us seems uncomfortable about the fact that aspiring singers are regularly told they aren't good enough to sing opera; it just seems reasonable and fair to let them know they aren't likely to make it. Yet, we have been ever so reluctant to tell prospective teachers that they aren't good enough for the classroom, and then after they are certified teachers, we wonder why so many of them aren't successful in the schools. It seems hard to make people understand that not only can't we all sing opera, we can't all teach school.

For the student who faces up to the painful reality that he or she does not belong in teaching or does not really want to be there, coun-

seling can assist the student in finding a career in which he or she can experience success and make a contribution. After a period of time, the emotional aspects of the decision are all over, and both the student and the profession are better served because of the student's decision to change careers.

When these traumatic sessions do not occur, but should, the likely outcome is too many teachers in the profession who are blundering along disliking or even hating their work, and usually making little contribution to the profession.

How could one get to the last semester of teacher preparation before discovering one was not well suited to teaching or did not like it? Invariably, the answer is that student teaching was the first point in the preparation program when the prospective teacher worked with children or did any teaching. We would find it an odd music curriculum that never let the aspiring opera singer try to sing until he or she was assigned a lead in an operatic performance. Yet, that is really what many of us have been doing with our prospective teachers.

It seems obvious that student teaching in a student's senior year is too late in the preparation of a prospective teacher for the first attempt at teaching or working with students. One wonders how the profession could allow this situation to exist. The reasons and excuses need not be detailed here. Simply celebrate the news that such practices are coming to an end. We are, at last, trying to determine who really wants to and can teach school at an earlier stage in the teacher education program through early field experiences.

Early field experiences are used to make a determination of a student's real commitment to and promise in the teaching profession and to provide the developmental opportunities required to be a success in the classroom. The term *teacher preparation field experiences* is an encompassing one. Generally, it is understood to refer to all those off campus directed activities for the preservice teacher that involve him or her in observing or interacting with students or personnel responsible for students. In a few universities the preservice teacher's interaction with students may occur in the university setting at the laboratory school, but it is more likely to occur in nearby public schools. The field experience location need not be school, however; it can be at a

Boy's Club, a Girl Scout troop meeting, a community youth agency, a daycare center, a camp, or any other site in which child- and youth-oriented programs are found. Some of the first early field experience programs were developed in such nonschool settings where the teacher education student spent time as a volunteer assisting a youth agency's professional staff.

The word *directed* is critical to the definition of teacher preparation field experience. Just taking preservice teachers off campus is not a teacher preparation field experience. There is no magic in simply moving students away from the university classroom no matter how far away the field site may be or how many students are housed there. *Directed* indicates that the experience provides purposeful activity that assists students in determining their real desire to teach and their promise as a teacher. It also provides an opportunity to practice teaching skills as they learn to translate theoretical knowledge into classroom practice. A student's specific purposes will be different with different field experiences, but they should all fall under one of the purposes specified above. The term *early field experience* is used to distinguish those programs that precede student teaching.

While the most obvious need for early field experiences is illustrated by the incidents related at the beginning of this chapter, there are at least four major needs that are addressed with an early field experience program.

1. The student need to know if he or she really likes students and wants to teach
2. The university need to know if the student has the promise of becoming a teacher
3. The student need to practice and develop instructional skills prior to the time of assuming major classroom responsibility in student teaching
4. The teacher education need to nurture better communication between the colleges of education and the schools where their students will be working as teachers

The Student Need To Know

There are so many different kinds of schools in this country that one

educator we know insists that he believes everything his students tell him about American education because he is sure that *somewhere* it is true and generally the students are simply relating their own experiences! We won't go so far as to say we believe everything a student tells us about schools, but we do agree that almost every student entertains a different notion of what schools and teaching are all about. That is one of the major reasons why students who think they want to be teachers sometimes get out into schools and find they do not. Their notion of schools and teaching simply was not what they found when they started teaching. For some students, the reality is at such variance with their aspirations for teaching, they simply won't or can't be a part of it. This is particularly true of older teacher education students who have not attended or been exposed to schools for many years. Teaching often just isn't what they expected it would be. With an early field experience program, the student has the opportunity to examine his personal ideas about schools and teaching in light of the reality of the situation.

With early field experiences the preservice teacher can also more accurately determine the grade level and kinds of students he finds most interesting and appealing. University students are not always aware of the many kinds of children the schools do serve. One student teacher preparing to teach secondary English volunteered to serve as a lifeguard in an after-school swimming program for elementary school blind youngsters who were housed in the high school where he was student teaching. He was so excited with the challenges and opportunities for helping these youngsters that he changed his career plans. Earlier opportunities to participate in a variety of teaching situations could have directed him much sooner.

The University Need To Know

Positive interaction with youngsters is generally believed to be a critical aspect of successful teaching. For most preservice teachers, developing effective interaction with youngsters is simply a matter of sufficient guidance and practice. Some preservice teachers require more practice than others. For some, however, no amount of practice is sufficient; they are simply ineffective when interacting with

youngsters. Without early field experiences, preservice teachers may believe themselves to be making good progress toward their goal of becoming teachers because of a good grade point average in their professional courses when, in fact, they are not at all able to translate their theory into effective practice. In these situations the university needs such information about a student as early as possible in order to redirect the student into a career in which he or she can be successful.

The Student Need To Practice Skills

Today's tight job market demands beginning teachers who can bring good skills to their initial teaching assignment. By participating in a series of early field experiences prior to student teaching, the student is more likely to come to that assignment able to begin full-time instruction. This earlier initiation into full-time teaching allows students to be more skilled at the end of student teaching than they would otherwise have been.

The earlier experiences also give preservice teachers a measure of confidence in teaching and working with youngsters, resulting in more self-assurance in both their student teaching and initial teaching job.

The Teacher Education Need To Improve Communication Between the School and University

An early field experience program can have a positive renewal effect on the faculties of both the schools and the teacher education institution. The school personnel can benefit from the energy, enthusiasm, and assistance that the preservice teacher can provide. The teacher education faculties can benefit from the continuing exposure to the reality of the school classroom. Ultimately, these two critical parties to the teacher education process could eliminate the territorial isolation engaged in by both.

Curiously absent from the list of needs for early field experience is a need based on research that documents emphatically that it will produce better teachers. Unfortunately, nobody yet has been able to prove completely that early or even late field experiences produce a better professional educator. Perhaps one reason that there is so little documentation in this area is that, as virtually the only common com-

ponent to teacher education programs in this country, field experiences enjoy such a high degree of content validity that they are almost above question. This has been especially true of the student teaching experiences. As more early field experiences are instituted, the research will develop and hopefully support such practices toward which our theory and common sense notions have directed us.

Organizing an Early Field Experiences Program

Traditionally there has been a certain amount of conflict between teacher education institutions with their theoretical orientation and the public schools with their practical and reality orientation. Much of this conflict has developed because the school and the university attempted to function independent of one another. A truly workable early field experiences program will require closer ties between schools and teacher education institutions. Such partnerships are not new; precedents exist in other professional programs.

Historical Precedents

In 1906 the University of Cincinnati instituted an engineering program based on the premise that a great deal of engineering skill can only be developed through on-the-job experience and training. Today university-industry partnerships in the U.S. in engineering number well over 200. Business and industrial education as well as medicine and law have long incorporated early field experiences into their professional preparation programs. Community colleges across the country also have attempted to incorporate the partnership concept in order to match their training programs with the realities of job performance requirements.

Although other professions have utilized the partnership approach for many years, teacher training institutions have until recently taken little advantage of such approaches. One of the earliest examples of a school-university (teacher-intern) partnership was at Temple Univer-

sity in Philadelphia in 1955. Several years ago, the University of Chicago developed cadres (teaching teams) for practical school experience in Chicago schools. More recently, other universities have implemented early field experiences programs (partnerships) in which professors and public school teachers work together to develop preservice professional programs.

The partnerships and cooperative efforts now underway have demonstrated that much productive learning for prospective teachers can result in our public school classrooms because of the exposure to actual school situations provided. There is really no substitute for the prospective teacher's exposure to the spontaneous behavior and varied learning styles of children. Such exposure requires that close and mutually supportive relationships between school districts and teacher training institutions be developed. Following are some suggestions for implementing an early field experiences program that will hopefully lead to a continuing school-university partnership in teacher education.

Setting Up Early Field Experiences

1. *Initiating the program.* Bring together representatives from the university and public and private schools, including parents, who are interested in programs that will benefit both preservice and inservice teachers as well as the schools. Discuss the possibility of developing an early field experiences program utilizing a partnership concept. Include in discussions the implications of an early field experiences program for all participants involved (university, administrators, students, and teachers). An early field experiences council made up of representatives of participants could be organized to help set up initial phases of the program, i.e., what the program is, how it will operate, how it will be administered and evaluated. Such a council would exist on a continuing basis to facilitate the program once it is developed.

2. *Program clarification for participants.* All concerned must become thoroughly familiar with the aims of the program and the areas of responsibility each is expected to assume. Inservice training for those administrators and teachers participating in early field experiences should be initiated as soon as is feasible. The college instructor should

explain the goals of the program to the students before they are assigned to schools, including routine matters such as dress codes, behavior, and promptness. Students must clearly understand that their role is to assist, not direct, the program in the school or community agency to which they have been assigned.

3. *Sequencing student participation.* All students should be assigned to schools or agencies after proper contact has been made and the number of placements has been determined. These students should report to the school or agency at which time the principal or agency director should assign students to staff who have expressed a desire to work with early experience students. After the first meeting, students should report directly to their respective classrooms or agencies on the assigned day.

4. *Specific tasks for student participation.* Early experience students seem to function best when assigned specific tasks, such as working with an individual pupil in a remedial setting involving reading, spelling, and arithmetic; working with small groups in the same academic areas; clerical duties like keeping records and grading papers; assisting the teacher, etc.

5. *Coordinating the Office for Early Field Experiences.* An office should be established at the university with one person assigned to administer the early field experiences program. This person and his or her staff make contacts with schools and agencies, orient students and participating staff, assign the students, and maintain a master schedule of placements. This office director also acts as a continuing liaison between the schools and the university in such areas as handling problems, conducting evaluations, and making necessary changes to make the program more effective.

Early field experiences for teacher education students will bring younger, less well prepared students into school settings, thus requiring new and different administrative structures in order to accommodate a new set of expectations and problems. Some school systems close to large colleges or universities may find that the addition of early field experience students might cause disruption in their schools simply because of sheer numbers. Unlike full-time student teaching assignments, in these early experience assignments students will be

sandwiching their activities between their regular classes and consequently will need to remain geographically close to their college or university. Another set of administrative problems for students and institutions involves scheduling and transportation. To address these problems, a variety of logistical and supervisory systems will need to be developed.

Although the public and private schools provide the most widely utilized and readily available laboratories for early experiences, teacher education staffs should explore other community resources where students can experience a variety of learning activities in different settings. These resources may include Boy and Girl Scouts, Boy's Clubs, senior citizens centers, youth centers, recreation departments, YMCA-YWCAs, Job Corps, prisons, preschool programs, and others.

One student that we had in elementary education did his early field experience in a youth correction center. He was so excited about his work there that he later changed his major to psychology, continued to volunteer and work at the center, and is now employed there part-time while he completes his education. A student majoring in social studies had received two semesters of early field experience at both the junior high and high school levels, but was still unsure about teaching. After some discussion, he decided to do an experience at the YMCA; he thoroughly enjoyed the experience and has changed his major to recreation. We heard later that he had received a YMCA-sponsored scholarship and will have a job upon graduating.

College and university faculty should make an effort to utilize a variety of community resources where such resources contribute to the preservice teacher's understanding of career opportunities, subject matter, teaching, and working with students.

Roles and Responsibilities in Early Field Experiences

The success of an early field experiences program requires a cooperative administrative structure. All members of the teacher education "partnership" should have specific roles and responsibilities identified for which they are accountable. The following are suggestions regarding the assignment of responsibilities to the various members of the partnership.

Role of the coordinator of field experiences

1. To plan and coordinate transportation, attendance, and other basic problems of students participating in early field experiences program
2. To communicate with all concerned (i.e., faculty, students, administration, teachers, advisors) in the program
3. To serve as a clearing-house for the variety of information relative to the early field experiences program
4. To identify and recruit new sources for early field experiences placement
5. To counsel students and assign them to appropriate field experiences
6. To develop necessary forms to insure the smooth operation and accountability of the program
7. To establish agreements with participating agencies

Role of the school administrator

1. To see that the guidelines and policies of both school and university are followed
2. To communicate with school district personnel regarding the early experiences participants and the program itself
3. To communicate with college and university representatives
4. To assess the quantity and quality of the field experiences program as it pertains to the school
5. To screen and match participants and supervising teachers
6. To encourage the inservice educational dimensions of the program with the school staff
7. To identify classes appropriate for observation, participation, or teaching
8. To assume a full partnership role in the planning and implementation of the program

Role of the classroom teacher

1. To give definite assignments to early experiences students as appropriate
2. To involve early experiences students in varied activities in the classroom
3. To evaluate in a manner agreed upon by the school and university

Role of teacher education faculty

1. To define the purposes and objectives of the early experiences program
2. To develop cooperatively school and university policies regarding the early experiences program
3. To plan for early experiences in the classroom and forecast what is going to happen as a result of those experiences
4. To mediate conflict between the cooperating teacher and early experiences students, involving administration as appropriate
5. To diagnose student strengths and weaknesses prior to placement
6. To evaluate student participation both independently and jointly with school personnel

Role of teacher education administration

1. To identify the various college or university personnel who will participate in the program
2. To communicate with all parties concerned with early field experiences
3. To provide adequate financial support for the program
4. To evaluate the program on a regular basis
5. To undertake both long- and short-range planning of early field experiences

Program Models

It is as impossible to describe the model of a typical early field experiences program as it is to describe the average child, for the simple reason that there is no average child and there is no typical early field experiences program. Every program has individual characteristics that reflect the particular theoretical bases, institutional philosophy, and unique characteristics of the school of education that conceived and implemented it. Every program has elements that are there by purpose and those that are there by necessity. At best, the common elements in early field experiences programs are students, instructors, and a setting where some dimension of the teaching-learning process is going on. This is probably as it should be. The wide variety of teachers needed in our schools virtually mandates such diversity in preparation programs.

The common element in early field experiences programs exists in the area of goals. While there may be institutional differences in emphasis, the intent of the programs is essentially the same: to introduce students to career opportunities in education, to provide enough exposure to allow both the university and the student to determine whether teaching is an appropriate career choice, and to provide some initial experiences in the teaching-learning process.

One of the best statements of the general goals of an early field experiences program was developed by a task force of Indiana teachers, administrators, students, and professors who cooperatively identified what those goals should be.

1. The early field experiences program will provide for exploration of career opportunities in teaching and related career fields.

2. The program will enable the student to participate in a hierarchical, sequential, and developmental set of experiences at different educational levels and community sites.

3. The program will establish for the student an experiential base upon which to judge the relationship of the total university program (basic theories) with the on-site experience (practical reality).

4. The program will help to establish evaluative patterns that promote a more effective selection process of teacher education candidates.

5. The program will help to establish mutually beneficial levels of communication and orientation between all partners, agencies, and institutions involved in teacher education.

6. The program will enrich the program of the public or private school where the field experience takes place.

7. The program will help to sharpen teacher candidates' perceptions of the teaching-learning process.

8. The program will help the teacher candidate become aware of and involved in the multiple roles and responsibilities of the teacher.

9. The program will provide the greatest possible opportunity for awareness of the many agents of education.

10. The program will allow a student to exercise increasing degrees of classroom management and assessment skills, planning, teaching, and responsibility in a supportive and facilitative environment.

These encompassing goals suggest a myriad of programs and objectives that translate into a variety of student experiences. Again, these programs will be specific to the institutions designing them, but in general, will fall into one of three models: 1) the course specific model, 2) the block of courses model, and 3) the program-related model. Following are descriptions of each of these models.

The Course Specific Model

Probably the most common model for early field experiences is one that simply attaches an on-site field experience to an existing teacher education course. Traditionally, in many of the introduction to teaching courses, students were sent out occasionally to observe in a school.

In some universities the teacher education students labeled this field trip activity as their "September Experience" since it took place at the beginning of the school year, and it allowed teacher education students to observe the dynamics of how teachers get a new school year underway. On the positive side, such course specific, one-shot field trip approaches were, at least, a nod to the need for some firsthand knowledge about schools and students. On the negative side, these approaches contributed little to the students' self-screening process or to improving the quality of the teacher education graduate.

There are two methods generally employed with the course specific model. The first is where each professor independently determines what kind and how many field experiences are required for his particular course. He then develops and implements those field experiences. The second is where those professors in a given teacher preparation area, such as secondary education, jointly determine what field experiences should be included in that area. They then designate which course will provide which experience. Though jointly developed, the field experiences are still related to a single course. The advantages to the joint development are obvious. There can be a predetermined scope and sequence, and students will not have to endure repetition of particular experiences.

The examples of activities in a course specific early field experience that follow are taken from a field-based curriculum that was developed independently by professors for their own courses.

Early Field Experience Activities in
Methods of Teaching Modern Languages

1. Observe instruction in two or more classrooms that use different approaches to the teaching of a foreign language.

2. Develop and use a lesson plan for a one-day instruction of a small group of secondary pupils.

3. Develop and use a lesson plan for a one-day instruction of a total class of secondary pupils.

4. Write a test that measures achievement of instructional objectives over a short period, e.g., a weekly or daily quiz. Administer, score, and analyze the test.

5. Investigate the resources of two or more communities for instruction in the culture of the language.

Early Field Experience Activities in Tests and Measurements

1. List the general and specific objectives of the classroom teacher. Describe the instruction used for one of them.

2. Observe the administration of a test. Help score the test.

3. Write a test to measure a classroom teacher's objectives in a specific unit: give it, score it, do an item analysis, and determine how it could be used in evaluating the pupils.

4. Observe a standardized test being administered; interview the teacher to learn what use is made of the scores.

The following activities for early field experiences were developed by a secondary education faculty. The designation in parentheses at the end of each activity indicates the course for which the activity is designed.

Early Field Experience Activities for Secondary Education Majors

1. Identify an example of a learning theory you have studied that has been translated into a classroom practice. (Foundations)

2. Visit three different instructional settings (team teaching classroom, individualized classroom, or traditional classroom) and report the differences you observe. (Foundations)

3. Attend a sports and a nonsports extracurricular event; observe and report the behavior of the students. (Foundations)

4. Work with a small group of students, applying principles learned about instruction and group dynamics. (Foundations)

5. Read a statement of the philosophical aims and objectives of a secondary school and discuss these with someone who teaches in that school. (Foundations)

6. Observe instruction in a classroom for the purpose of identifying and analyzing selected evaluation methods. (Measurement)

7. Observe the administration of a test, score it for the teacher, and discuss the use of the results. (Measurement)

8. Prepare and administer a test, score it, and discuss with the classroom teacher possible uses for the results. (Measurement)

9. Confer with a retired teacher, administrator, or other school employee about the changes in education over the years. (Principles)

10. Attend a general faculty meeting. (Principles)

11. Attend a school board meeting. (Principles)

12. Observe the tasks of the guidance counselor, school nurse, dean of boys or girls, and the school social worker and list the ways in which each serves the school community. (Principles)

13. Visit with a department head in your own subject area to discuss the most recent trends in teaching in that area. (Methods)

14. Converse with teachers and students and secure their ideas about the qualities needed for a successful teacher in your subject area. (Methods)

15. Begin a class session for a teacher. (Methods)

16. Work with a small group of students in the classroom. (Methods)

17. Prepare and present a lesson. (Methods)

18. Tutor a student who is having difficulty in your subject area. (Methods)

There are two major advantages to organizing early field experiences around a specific course. First, it is easy to do; the individual professor simply builds it into his class along with the other assignments. Second, and far more important, the student receives almost immediate feedback about the theory he is learning in his university classes through observation of or participation in the school classroom.

The Block of Courses Model

This particular format for organizing early field experiences is most often found in the elementary teacher preparation program since several methods courses are frequently taught in a unified format or block of courses. Since it is unlikely that such a block would be taught by one professor, the objectives and activities are usually the result of team planning and organization.

Ordinarily, in the block arrangement the students have three different levels of field experiences. Generally, early in their program the

students will be sent out for a few days of directed observation in a classroom. Later in the term they will return to a classroom as a teacher assistant in a supportive instructional role. Then, near the end of the term, the students will go into classrooms again, but this time they will be responsible for some instruction of the students there. Often the lessons the university students teach are those they have prepared for their block course, and the work has already been presented to their peers and professors for practice and critiquing prior to its use in the classroom.

In the block of courses model some programs have as another objective for early field experiences the opportunity for teacher education students to observe the rate of pupil growth and learning in the classroom. When this is an objective, the teacher education students always return to the same group of students when they go into the field.

Other block of courses models have as an objective for early field experiences the opportunity for teacher education students to associate with a variety of instructional settings and kinds of students. When this is the objective, the teacher education student is moved to a different instructional setting and a different group of students for each field experience.

The advantage of the block of courses model is that the field experiences are instructionally interrelated just as they would be in actual classroom teaching. Students will experience firsthand how, for example, their reading methods are related to their science methods.

The Program-Related Model

The least common organizational model for early field experiences is the program-related model, which specifies the field experiences a teacher education student should have, but doesn't tie them to an individual course or courses. In this plan the student signs up for field experience hours (usually one or two a semester) and reports to a field experience office that assigns him a location and a supervisor (usually a graduate assistant). Over a period of several semesters, the teacher education student will complete all the field experiences objectives specified for a major in his field. The student is ordinarily eligible for "observation" experiences during his freshman and sophomore years,

and "participation" experiences during his junior and senior years.

The advantage of the program-related model for early field experiences is an organizational one. In large universities, particularly those located in small towns, there simply would be too many demands for placements in the local schools and agencies if every professor were negotiating one for each education student. With a central field experience office handling all the placements, field experiences can be more easily scheduled. Students who could not be accommodated in a given semester would still be able to earn credit in their teacher education courses, but their field experiences could be taken when an opportunity was available.

The disadvantage of the program-related model is the student's lack of immediate feedback from the theoretical discussions in teacher education courses. In all fairness, however, this disadvantage can be overcome to some extent by the field experience office personnel who meet with the students under their supervision for questions and discussion.

Problems Along the Way

Implementing early field experiences presents some problems. Some of the problems are philosophical and political, like those that deal with the nature of teacher education and its governance. Some are as pedestrian as who pays the bus fare if a student has to travel away from the university for early field experiences. For our purposes we will discuss the major problems in two general categories, the philosophical and the logistical.

Philosophical Problems

Why is there a major philosophical question related to early field experiences for prospective teachers? We regularly send prospective nurses and physicians into clinical settings. Going back to our earlier analogy of the opera singer, we would anticipate no objection to putting the aspiring singer in a number of small roles prior to the time he or she takes on a lead role. There are, however, two major philosophical questions to be raised when early field experiences are considered. The first has to do with the nature of teacher education and the second with its governance.

The philosophical question raised in relation to early field experiences and the nature of teacher education in oversimplified terms goes something like this: If the student can learn so much from the practitioner and the field setting, why not just sign him on as an apprentice with a classroom teacher and completely dispense with schools of education? The philosophical issue, then, becomes *what is*

the proper education for a teacher? This issue has long been a topic of heated debate, and we will not attempt to resolve it in the limited space of this fastback. However, we cite it as an issue that has been and certainly will continue to be raised when dealing with the theoretical foundations of teacher preparation programs. It should be raised. It is a critical question, and it must be resolved within the institutions designing early field experiences programs if they hope to implement them successfully. Nothing can so quickly diminish the quality of a program as having people involved who do not believe in it.

The argument in support of early field experiences is that they are already an accepted and integral part of teacher preparation. This position holds that the new emphasis on *early* experiences is simply an issue of degree, not kind. The argument against support for early field experiences is that the teacher candidates will not possess a sufficiently broad theoretical base on which to act if field experiences take up the time in which such a base should be developed.

There is, of course, truth on both sides. That is why the issue has resisted resolution as long as it has. What has to be said to both sides is that colleges of education usually have only four years to prepare and certify teacher candidates. They share much of that time with other university departments. In the final analysis, teacher education faculties must resolve what they believe is most consequential for their students to accomplish in order to become good teachers. It is not easily decided; it never has been.

Historically, schools of education have jealously guarded their right to determine curriculum and to judge when it has been satisfactorily completed. Such "rights" may come into conflict with the partnership concept for preparing teachers. Here is the question: Are school of education faculties going to allow practicing teachers and administrators to have an equal voice in the planning and evaluation of early field experiences? After all, most of those field sites belong to the public schools, not to the schools of education. The governance of teacher education is and will continue to be an issue for debate and negotiation.

We must assume integrity and sincerity on both sides of the governance issue. There are those teacher educators who sincerely believe

that they, as scholars in the field, should not leave basic decisions about teacher preparation to others. Although we would be the first to admit that in some cases such a position reflects simply snobbery, it should not be summarily dismissed as only that. There is a great deal that occurs in schools that research indicates should not be done and certainly should not be emulated as a training model. Scholars have been charged with knowing those things; time is provided for them to find them out. Practitioners are given no such charge or time to pursue it. This is not to discredit the exemplary work of many practitioners; it is simply to recognize that each group has different roles and responsibilities. Both practitioner and professor are honorable callings, and very few of us need to be both. We must compliment each other's excellence and cease trying to prove we are all alike. We are not alike and probably shouldn't be.

To accept each other as equals in governance means both teacher educators and practitioners are going to have to resolve their conflicts about their appropriate roles. It also means that both are going to have to stop pretending that the other doesn't know anything. And, this conflict must be resolved very early on if the field experience program in teacher education is going to maintain any real integrity. At the very least, the teachers, professors, and administrators involved must sit down and start talking before they do anything else.

It is better to delay the implementation of the early field experiences programs until issues about governance are, at least, on their way to resolution. This is particularly true of those questions related to who is "in charge." Under no circumstances should the students be "in charge"! We know one horror story about a professor who told some prospective teachers to get some experience in a school system that had said it would be fine to send them. They all got some experience! Among other things, these eager prospective teachers tested children and telephoned their parents with comments like, "Your son is really very dumb; why do you expect him to make good grades?" Only a considerable amount of fence mending in that community kept several lawsuits from being filed.

The philosophical dilemmas are the real barriers to successful implementation of early field experiences, and we emphasize again that

they must be resolved among individual faculties and school districts before the logistical aspects of the programs should even be considered. Once a teacher education faculty and a district are committed to providing early field experiences, they will usually be able to cope with the logistical problems.

Logistical Problems

The first logistical problem to be dealt with is placement, and it is an enormous one. It involves both finding appropriate locations for students and establishing a process for doing so that does not overburden either the schools or the university administratively.

A committee or council is the most efficient means of identifying sites for placements. In such an arrangement, representatives of the participating schools, agencies, and universities sit down with lists of the available sites and the anticipated needs and come to cooperative decisions as to which students will be located where, when, and for what purpose. This talking-through process allows all concerned to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of each need and situation. This kind of interaction greatly improves the possibility of successful, if not completely individualized, placements. These councils need to meet only occasionally during the year, and much administrative time can be saved with their use.

The alternatives to the council approach are 1) individual professors contacting individual schools and teachers, or 2) field experience directors collecting the early experience placement needs of the university faculty and then contacting the specific schools and teachers. If the university is making a large number of placements, preregistration for courses with field experience components is a necessity in order to have time to schedule all the placements.

The second logistical problem in implementing early field experiences is budgeting for personnel and for travel. The personnel costs must include payment for the university supervisor, payment for the cooperating teacher or agency, and payment for the administrative staff required in both the university and the school.

Supervision of early field experiences is essential. Students cannot be sent to field sites with a hope that just going there will be a worth-

while professional experience. They must be given directed, monitored experiences. This takes professional time, and professional time is expensive. In one semester a typical professor with three classes of 25 students, each of whom is expected to complete five field experiences, is faced with 375 field experiences to direct and monitor in addition to meeting his or her classes. The professor will also have other job-related responsibilities, and the field sites may all be some distance from the university campus. The professor's task is clearly impossible. Schools of education serious about implementing early field experiences are going to have to limit the enrollment in the field experience classes or reduce the number of classes the professor is assigned. Those are both very costly alternatives, one of which must be chosen if the program has any hope of accomplishing what was intended.

The personnel in the cooperating schools and agencies must also be given some form of compensation. To the eternal credit of the classroom teachers, they seldom insist on payment. However, if they are to become a permanent and integral part of the teacher preparation program, teachers must be given some material reward for doing so. Whether that reward is in the form of free tuition or testimonial dinners, it still must ultimately be translated into dollars.

Finally, there will be additional administrative time required in both universities and schools when large numbers of students must be placed in early field experiences. This time represents still another personnel cost.

In addition to these rather considerable personnel costs, travel costs must be added. Faculty and students must go to the sites where the experiences have been arranged. Public transportation may or may not be available. Most students do not own cars. On many residential campuses students are not allowed to have cars on campus even if they do own them. So, in addition to funds to pay mileage, funds for transportation must also be counted into the total cost.

While personnel and travel are the two largest cost categories, there are other costs in early field experiences programs that should also be noted. Some form of liability and accident insurance coverage for the prospective teacher may be mandated by state regulations. Insurance coverage must also be arranged for the student for accidents that may

occur while traveling in university-owned vehicles. Legal fees are also incurred when contracts must be drawn up with cooperating school districts and service agencies.

These are real problems that must be faced when early field experiences are added to a teacher education program. None of the problems is likely to be impossible to solve, but each will require serious attention.

Shared Benefits

Current trends in teacher education indicate that public school personnel will have a stronger voice in the development and implementation of preservice professional programs. In line with these trends, teacher education institutions should begin to implement a school-university partnership in which education professors and public school teachers and administrators work together as an organization of peers to develop early field experiences programs. Both schools and universities will benefit from well-planned, well-executed early field experiences. The entire profession will benefit from better prepared teachers for tomorrow.

The benefits to classroom teachers come from the university students who are available to give assistance during much of the school day. The students can be assigned duties such as small group tutoring, remedial work with small groups, individualizing instruction for the pupil needing special help, helping with clerical work, and helping with displays for the classroom.

Elementary and secondary pupils benefit by receiving the additional attention aimed at their specific needs. For example, a pupil who has deficiencies in word attack skills or multiplying decimals can, in an early experiences program, receive intensive individualized instruction from a university student several hours a week.

The prospective teachers benefit by gaining real-life experiences with students in the classroom. As a result of these firsthand experiences, students will know whether they want to commit themselves to a

career in education. If they find teaching not to their liking, they can eliminate themselves from the teacher preparation program during the freshman or sophomore year, thus allowing themselves adequate time to pursue a more suitable field of study. But more important, the overall impact of the program for those who commit themselves to the profession is four years of cumulative experiences that translate their theoretical base into dynamic teaching-learning experiences in the classroom.

Benefits to college professors come from having their content and theory both updated and illuminated by continuing firsthand experience in schools. Thus, teacher educators are able to present more reality-based instruction in their classes and begin to bridge the gaps between theory and practice for which teacher education has long been criticized.

Finally, the greatest benefit to be derived from the early experience thrust in teacher education is better educated and more competent teachers entering the profession.

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